U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
POLLUTION/SITUATION REPORT
2015 Gold King Mine Blowout - Polrep/Sitrep
Initial Polrep/Sitrep

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
Region 8

Subject: **SITREP #1**
Initial Situation Report
Gold King Mine Blowout

San Juan County, Colorado
Latitude: 37.8945 Longitude: -107.6384

To:
Thru: David Ostrander, Regional Incident Coordinator
From: R8 IMT Situation Unit
Date: 08/06/2015
Reporting Period:

Executive Summary

On August 5, 2015, an EPA team working to investigate and address contamination at the Gold King Mine in San Juan County, Colorado, unexpectedly triggered a large release of mine waste water into the upper portions of Cement Creek. Initial estimates are that the release contained approximately one million gallons of water that was held behind unconsolidated debris near an abandoned mine portal. There were several workers at the site at the time of the breach, all were unharmed.

Following the release, the Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment (CDPHE) notified water users downstream so they could take appropriate steps to turn off intakes until the contaminated water passes. The Town of Silverton does not take water out of the affected portions of Cement Creek.

The primary environmental concern is the pulse of contaminated water containing sediment and metals flowing as an orange-colored discharge downstream through Cement Creek and into the Animas River. The water associated with the release is obvious and highly discolored. As a precaution, EPA recommends that recreational users of the Animas River avoid contact with or use of the river until the pulse of mine water passes. Over the next several days, EPA teams will be sampling and investigating downstream locations to confirm that the release has passed and poses no additional concerns for aquatic life or water users. EPA will also be assessing damage near the mine portal and any residual releases of water at the mine site.

Water continues to be released from the mine at a slower rate. EPA has met with San Juan County, Colorado, and will be meeting with La Plata County, Colorado, later today.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Site Number:		**Contract Number:**	
D.O. Number:		**Action Memo Date:**	
Response Authority:	CERCLA	**Response Type:**	Emergency
Response Lead:	EPA	**Incident Category:**	
NPL Status:		**Operable Unit:**	
Mobilization Date:	08/05/2015	**Start Date: 08/05/15**	
Demob Date:		**Completion Date:**	
CERCLIS ID:		**RCRIS ID:**	
ERNS No.:		**State Notification:**	08/05/15

1.1.1 Incident Category

1.1.2 Site Description.

1.1.2.1 Location San Juan County, Colorado, and La Plata County, Colorado.

1.1.2.2 Description of Threat

Approximately one million gallons of mine waste water was released into Cement Creek and the Animas River. The primary environmental concern is the pulse of contaminated water containing sediment and metals flowing as an orange-colored discharge downstream through Durango, Colorado. The City of Durango depends on daily withdrawals from the Animas River for their drinking water. The river is also used for recreational purposes, including fishing and rafting.

1.1.3 Preliminary Removal Assessment/Removal Site Inspection Results

Water sampling has occurred (analysis pending), and pH levels and other water quality parameters

are being monitored.

1.2 Incident Objectives
The incident overall objective is to protect the drinking water supply of the City of Durango, and others who may be using the river for various purposes.

1.3 Critical Resource Needs
No information available at this time.

1.4 Strategic Considerations
No information available at this time.

2. Current Activities
2.1 Operations Section
2.1.1 Narrative

1. Water quality sampling has occurred and results are pending. OCS has been deployed to the area. EPA Region 8 staff are coordinating with relevant county/city officials.

2.1.2 Response Actions to Date

Water quality sampling by EPA Region 8 staff occurred last night and this morning, and will occur mid-day today, at 6:00pm tonight, and at midnight. START will take over the sampling after this. EPA Region 8's lab in Golden, Colorado, is being used to analyze the samples, but a closer lab is being sought. Meetings have been held with San Juan County, Colorado, officials, and a meeting with La Plata County, Colorado, officials is planned for later today. As requested, EPA Region 8 or ATSDR will consult with them on personal safety issues for people potentially affected by the contaminated water.

EPA Region 8 staff will meet with the Durango City Engineer to analyze and implement measures to protect the Durango drinking water supply.

ASPECT has been deployed and will arrive in Durango, Colorado, to fuel this evening.

Region 8 is coordinating with Region 6 on the incident.

2.1.3 Enforcement Activities, Identity of Potentially Responsible Parties (PRPs)

2.1.4 Progress Metrics

2.2 Planning Section
2.2.1 Anticipated Activities
The Planning Section's Situation Unit stood up as of 08/06/2015 in the Region 8 REOC. An initial SITREP has been prepared. Additional activities are to be determined.

ASPECT has been deployed and will arrive in Durango, Colorado, to fuel this evening.

2.2.1.1 Planned Response Activities

2.2.1.2 Next Steps

2.2.2 Issues

2.3 Logistics Section
No information at this time.

2.4 Finance Section
2.4.1 Narrative
Not stood up

Mission Number	Mission Assignment Description	Funding Amount (in thousands)	Status

2.5 Other Command Staff
2.5.1 Safety Officer
2.5.2 Liaison Officer
2.5.3 Information Officer
2.5.4 Weather Forecast
Weather forecast for August 06, 2015:

Mostly sunny, with a high near 88. West wind 5 to 10 mph.

3. Participating Entities
3.1 Unified Command

3.2 Cooperating Agencies
The Colorado Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office is monitoring effects on wildlife and aquatic life in the affected area.

4. Personnel On Site

Gold King Mine Blowout 2015	
	08/06/2015
Group	**Number**
EPA @ REOC	13
Contractors @ REOC	0
EPA in Field	2
Contractors in Field	Several (count TBD)
WERT Reg 8	0

5. Definition of Terms

No information available at this time.

6. Additional sources of information

No information available at this time.

7. Situational Reference Materials

No information available at this time.